

ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday, 21 July 2021 at 6.00 pm in Telford Room, Addenbrooke House, Ironmasters Way, Telford, TF3 4NT

Present: Councillors V J Holt, G L Offland and G C W Reynolds (Chair).

Also Present: Councillor C Healy (Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Green Spaces, Natural and Historic Environment)

In Attendance: A Lowe (Associate Director: Policy & Governance), K Robinson (Democracy Officer (Scrutiny)), L Stanway (Group Manager: Community Services, Communities, Customer & Commercial Services)

Apologies: Councillors M Boylan, C Cassar, T L B Janke and T J Nelson

ENVSC28 Declarations of Interest

None.

ENVSC29 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

ENVSC30 Work Programme 2021/2022

The Chair provided an overview of the items on the draft work programme for the year 2021/2022. It was recommended that the Seating in Green Spaces suggestion be removed from the work programme.

Members agreed the work programme as amended.

ENVSC31 Plastic Free Update

Members received the presentation of the Group Manager: Community Services, Communities, Customer & Commercial Services.

As part of the plastic free agenda, the Council was committed to removing single-use plastics from its activities, and replacing them with sustainable alternatives, by 2023. The Authority had also established a Plastic Free Taskforce.

Due to the challenges presented by Covid-19, it had not been possible to hold community events, meeting had been held online where possible but this had

meant that a number of projects were on hold. Some practices that had been put in place prior to the pandemic had had to stop during Covid response.

In terms of the Council's own action plan, there had been progress and a report detailing the work undertaken had been presented to Cabinet in September 2020.

The Plastic Free Taskforce had regrouped in January 2021, new members joined and there was an opportunity to take stock. All of the Borough's town councils had signed up to the Taskforce and it was noted that Newport Town Council had already gained Plastic Free Community status. Since regrouping, AO and Wrekin Housing Group had signed up to the taskforce.

From spring 2021, as the country had reopened, in person activities had run with litter picking events across a number of areas. At the litter picks, participants had been asked to separate the items picked so that items could be recycled where possible. There was also a new recycling process in the Street Champions scheme; all street champions were now issued with clear bags that contractors recognised as recycling bags to be taken away separately.

Work was underway on an ocean fish project, launched as part of a schools education programme with 23 schools participating and learning about the impact of plastic on the ocean. Each school had painted a fish sculpture that would be displayed in the Town Park as part of the Balloon Festival.

The Council had undertaken a number of promotions and campaigns in aid of the plastic free agenda via social media, the Sustainable Telford website, and an e-newsletter. There had also been links to national campaigns such as National Refill Day and Plastic Free July.

Moving forward, there were a number of projects in the works. A Green Guide, central platform offering advice on improving sustainability and promoting sustainable businesses in the Borough, was being worked on. The Authority was also arranging educational visits to AO, a flagship employer in the Borough, to visit the recycling centre.

Despite the pandemic, it was still believed that the Authority would meet its 2023 plastic free target.

A discussion followed with Members discussing how to influence behavioural changes and encourage environmentally friendly consumer choices. The opening of plastic free/refill/zero waste shops was discussed, with Members highlighting a recently opened plastic free refill shop in Oakengates.

How could messaging on domestic food waste be improved?

The increased ease of recycling made consumption easier, the key was to stop creating plastic waste. It was necessary to change behaviours, explaining not to buy plastic in the first place, and this was why the Green Guide was being created – to help people find reusable options near them.

Was there a way to encourage shops to have a green section?

The Council's influence in the area was negligible, especially with regard to chain shops. In relation to independent stores, the Council had an advantage through grant schemes to encourage such initiatives.

A plastic free shopping event, encouraging shoppers to try local refillable stores in a fun and supportive environment was suggested.

ENVSC32 Chair's Update

Members were reminded that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 6 October 2021.

The meeting ended at 6.44 pm

Chairman:

Date: 6 October 2021